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WILDLIFE SERVICES—NORTH CAROLINA

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in North Carolina

Every day, North Carolina residents call on Wildlife Services (WS) for help in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. WS' professional wildlife biologists responds to these requests with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

WS works to protect property and reduce human health and safety risks at airports, schools, and along roadways. The program also protects people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases; guards many natural resources, such as fisheries and timber, from wildlife depredation; and educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. Specific projects conducted by North Carolina WS include, protecting endangered piping plovers, loggerhead turtles, and green turtles from predation; conducting sampling and monitoring for West Nile virus and rabies; and managing damage caused by beavers, pigeons, starlings, and other wildlife.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

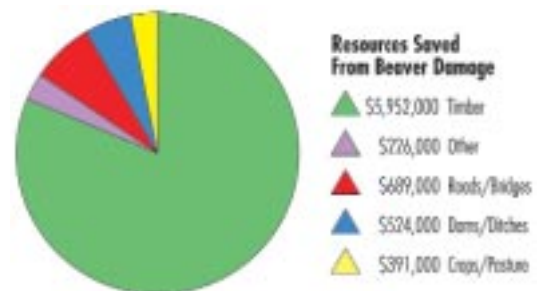
WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this technical assistance can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or direct assistance, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts scientific research across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Transportation, Agriculture, and Natural Resources—In North Carolina, beaver historically were considered a valuable natural resource and an extremely important part of the economy. In recent years, however, little demand for beaver products has resulted in a decrease in trapping, and subsequent increase in beaver numbers. Beaver now occupy nearly all watersheds in the State, and Statewide population estimates are approach-



ing 500,000. While this population escalation has resulted in some benefits derived from beaver activities, such as increased wetland habitat, reduced downstream sedimentation, and improved water quality, the detrimental impacts from beaver activities have also increased. From 1993 to 2002, WS received more than 9,400 requests for assistance with beaver damage problems. Typical requests for assistance involved damage to roadways and bridges, agriculture and forest resources, and flooding of municipal sewer and water treatment facilities.

To address some of these problems, the Beaver Management Assistance Program (BMAP) was established. The BMAP assists the Department of Transportation (DOT), city and county governments, soil and water conservation districts, private landholders, and others with beaver problems. The program is run by WS through a cooperative service agreement with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. Funding comes from State, county, Federal, and private sources. Since the inception of the program in 1992, BMAP activities have prevented the loss of, or damage to more than



Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting property and public health and safety from beaver damage
- Protecting civil and military aviation from wildlife strikes
- Managing damage caused by pigeons, starlings, and blackbirds
- Managing damage caused by Canada geese
- Protecting aquaculture from bird depredation

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to North Carolina:

- Improving aquatic rodent damage management methods
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing bird predation to aquaculture
- Evaluating waterfowl as disease, parasite, and noxious weed reservoirs
- Managing wildlife transmission of rabies

\$44 million in resources. In fiscal year (FY) 2002, an estimated \$7.7 million in resources was saved. Of particular note, FY 2001 and 2002 BMAP activities protected the driving public and saved the DOT an estimated \$1.4 million in repair costs by alleviating flooded roadways. In addition, beaver-induced flooding at 23 North Carolina sewer and water treatment facilities averted an estimated \$400,000 in damages.

WS routinely uses explosives to remove beaver dams that are flooding property. Before using explosives, North Carolina WS personnel are trained and certified in the safe and effective use of explosives. In June 2002, the North Carolina office hosted WS' National Basic and Advanced Explosives Safety Training Courses. Twenty-four WS personnel from throughout the country attended the training.

From FY 2001 to the present WS has cooperated with the North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission and the New York Department of Environmental Conservation to conduct a research study involving testing trap trigger configurations in order to reduce otter capture rates.

Protecting Air Travel—Wildlife collisions with airplanes cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$470 million annually and pose a great hazard to flight crews and passengers. The Department of Defense (DOD) experiences similar wildlife concerns related to aviation safety. In FY 2002, WS provided direct and technical assistance to 6 DOD aircraft installations and 8 civilian airports in North Carolina. Technical assistance to airports included initial consultations, the development of wildlife hazard assessments and wildlife hazard management plans, and the training of airport personnel to reduce the risk of wildlife collisions with aircraft. Direct assistance projects involved the management of animals hazardous to aircraft operations at the site. All of these efforts serve to reduce the potential costs and danger associated with wildlife strikes.

During FY 2002, the North Carolina office was honored to assist the national program as the host of the semi-annual WS airport personnel training course. The program was particularly pleased to host the event given that the selection was based on the recent growth and strength of services provided to military airports in North Carolina. The support programs that WS implements at North Carolina's U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Air Force bases are nationally recognized as hallmark programs in their respective service branches.

WS' National Wildlife Research Center is also recognized internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS researchers work to understand the nature of wildlife hazards at airports, develop management tools to reduce these hazards, and provide airport personnel with information to control hazards. WS researchers coauthored the 248-page manual provided by the Federal Aviation Administration to all certified airports in the United States on managing wildlife hazards at airports. Currently, North Carolina program personnel are contributing to this effort by working with NWRC scientists to assess the effects of treated waste water application on grassland habitats to reduce wildlife use of these areas at the U.S. Marine Corps Aircraft Station (MCAS)



Cherry Point in eastern North Carolina. Program personnel at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base and MCAS Cherry Point also are involved with projects designed to enhance the development of portable radar units used to detect bird movements in the airport environment.

Looking to the Future

In North Carolina, public safety is a concern for wildlife managers. This is particularly true at airports. Additional attention must be given to this very specialized area of work.

A second issue related to public safety and economic loss involves the increased need to manage beaver damage caused by the State's rapidly growing beaver population. Attacks on people by rabid beavers in North Carolina increased the public's awareness of this issue, as did the CSX train carrying hazardous chemicals that derailed after beavers undermined the railroad trestle.

The State also has a need to manage the transmission and spread of raccoon rabies. North Carolina WS is currently preparing to participate in WS' national effort to prevent the westward spread of raccoon rabies, and, hopefully, to eliminate rabies from the United States.

North Carolina Wildlife Services Funding • • • • •

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

